

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BRASIL 03567 202139Z

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ACTION NEA-16

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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3371

S E C R E T BRASILIA 3567

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: TECH, IN, BR

SUBJ: BRAZILIAN REACTION TO INDIAN NUCLEAR TESTING

REF: STATE 104647

SUMMARY: INDIAN NUCLEAR TEST RECEIVED EXTENSIVE COVERAGE IN THE BRAZILIAN PRESS. ALTHOUGH EDITORIAL COMMENT HAS BEEN LIMITED THUS FAR, THE TONE OF PUBLISHED COMMENT IS TINGED WITH ADMIRATION FOR "POOR BOY" MAKING GOOD. THE INDIAN TEST WILL PROBABLY SPUR BRAZIL'S OWN NUCLEAR AMBITIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. THE INDIAN NUCLEAR TEST WAS REPORTED PROMINENTLY IN THE BRAZILIAN PRESS, DRAWING MAINLY ON WIRE SERVICE COVERAGE. STORIES NOTED INEVITABLE IMPACT OF THIS DEVELOPMENT ON POWER BALANCE IN ASIA, AND NOTED THAT, IN WORDS OF PRESTIGIOUS ESTADO DE SAO PUALO"...ACCORDING TO OBSERVERS, INDIA'S ACCESSION TO THE ATOMIC CLUB CAN UNLEASH A REACTION FROM VARIOUS COUNTRIES CAPABLE OF PRODUCING THE BOMB--INCLUDING LATIN AMERICANS--WHO FEEL THEMSELVES UNPROTECTED IN THE FACE OF THE INDIAN TEST."

2. LIBERAL JORNAL DE BRASILIA FEATURED A FRONT-PAGE

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 BRASIL 03567 202139Z

SPREAD WITH A HEADLINE PROCLAIMING THAT BRAZIL, ARGENTINA

AND ISRAEL WERE FRONT-RUNNERS IN COMPETITION TO BECOME THE SEVENTH NUCLEAR POWER. THE ARTICLE NOTED THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE PACIFIST GANDHI TRADITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF AN INDIAN NUCLEAR CAPABILITY, STRESSED THE INDIAN DECLARATION OF NON-USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS, AND CONCLUDED WITH THE OBSERVATION THAT BRAZIL HAD GREAT INTEREST IN LEARNING FROM THE "INDIAN MODEL" OF NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT. THE IMPORTANT JORNAL DO BRASIL REMINDED ITS READERS THAT BRAZIL (ALONG WITH INDIA, ISRAEL, FRANCE AND ARGENTINA) WAS NOT A SIGNATORY TO THE NPT AND NOTED THAT GENERAL COSTA E SILVA, SHORTLY AFTER HIS INAUGURATION AS THE SECOND "REVOLUTIONARY" PRESIDENT OF BRAZIL IN 1967, HAD STATED THAT, "...THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN THE NUCLEAR ENERGY FIELD INEVITABLY INCLUDES, AT SOME POINT, THE USE OF EXPLOSIONS." THE JORNAL DE BRASILIA ALSO NOTED THAT, ACCORDING TO A 1967 STUDY, BRAZIL COULD CONSTRUCT ITS OWN NUCLEAR BOMB IN 10 TO 15 YEARS AT A COST OF 1.5 BILLION CRUZEIROS. PRESS COVERAGE, IN GENERAL, TINGED WITH ADMIRATION FOR INDIAN ACCOMPLISHMENT, ALTHOUGH STATEMENTS OF AMERICAN STATE AND DEFENSE DEPARTMENT PRESS SPOKESMEN WERE PROMINENTLY FEATURED.

3. WITH RESPECT TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS RAISED REFTTEL, ALTHOUGH THE BRAZILIAN AUTHORITIES HAVE NOT RELEASED ANY COMMENT, WE THINK IT MOST UNLIKELY THAT THE BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT WILL EXPRESS DISPLEASURE OVER THE INDIAN TEST. RATHER, THE TEST IS LIKELY TO SPUR BRAZILIAN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE NUCLEAR FIELD, BY DEMONSTRATING THAT A DEVELOPING COUNTRY CAN ACHIEVE A SORT OF BIG POWER STATUS IN SPITE OF DIRE POVERTY, AND BY REMINDING BRAZILIANS, WHO ARE ALREADY SENSITIZED TO THE FACT, THAT ARGENTINA, WITH ALL ITS POLITICAL INSTABILITY, IS INDEED A POTENTIAL NUCLEAR POWER. WE JUDGE THAT THE INDIAN TEST WILL REINFORCE THE GOB'S NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE NPT. THE U.S. GOVERNMENT'S REACTION TO THE INDIAN TEST IS UNLIKELY TO HAVE A DETERRENT EFFECT ON BRAZIL'S NUCLEAR INTENTIONS OR ITS POSITION ON NPT.

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